

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today announced that the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education will receive significant new funding under the federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program. In the grant's first year, the state will receive \$3,978,424, and the grant is expected to be extended for a total of six years.

"This funding is critical to helping low-income and disadvantaged youths pursue postsecondary education in New Jersey," Holt said. "The strength of our communities and vitality of our economy depend on the effectiveness of our schools. This grant will help to ensure that New Jersey students receive equal access to high-quality secondary and postsecondary education."

The GEAR UP program is designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP provides six-year grants to states and partnerships to provide services at high-poverty middle and high schools. GEAR UP grantees serve an entire cohort of students beginning no later than the seventh grade and follow the cohort through high school.

In previous years, about 1,500 students in Camden, Jersey City, Newark, Paterson, and Trenton have participated in the GEAR UP program. According to evaluations performed by the University of California and Rutgers University, these students produced higher SAT scores and completed high school and pursued postsecondary education at significantly higher rates than their non-GEAR UP counterparts.

The latest grant expands the GEAR UP program in New Jersey to serve a total of 2,319 students in 58 middle and high schools in Atlantic City, Bridgeton, Camden, Jersey City, Newark, Paterson, Pleasantville, and Trenton. Students in these communities may need particular help in order to succeed in college, as the median per-capita income of these cities is 38% of the New Jersey median, and the most recent unemployment rates are 65% higher than the statewide rates.

The New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, in collaboration with other agencies and institutions, will provide participating students with encouragement, academic and support services, and funding to pursue undergraduate education. Services will include counseling, after-school tutoring, Saturday classes, summer programs, mentoring, college visits, the Online

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SAT Readiness Program, and assistance with preparing a college application and filing for financial aid. In addition to early intervention, the project will have a strong state-funded scholarship component.

Holt, a longtime advocate for efforts to help high school students reach college, wrote a letter of support for New Jersey's GEAR UP grant application.